

IN THE CLAIMS:

The following claims are pending in the instant application:

1. (Currently amended) A contrast enhancement agent useful for providing a visible image of a biological sample comprising:

- (a) at least one peptide comprising the amino acid sequence NXEQVSP (SEQ ID NO: 1), wherein X is ~~any~~ an amino acid selected from the group consisting of alanine, arginine, asparagine, aspartic acid, cysteine, glutamic acid, glycine, histidine, isoleucine, leucine, lysine, methionine, phenylalanine, proline, serine, threonine, tryptophan, tyrosine, and valine;
- (b) at least one paramagnetic metal ion; and
- (c) at least one chelator.

2. (Original) The contrast enhancement agent of claim 1, wherein the paramagnetic metal ion is selected from the group consisting of transition, lanthanide and actinide elements.

3. (Original) The contrast enhancement agent of claim 2, wherein the paramagnetic metal ion is selected from the group consisting of Gd(III), Mn(II), Cu(II), Cr(III), Fe(II), Fe(III), Co(II), Er(II), Ni(II), Eu(III) and Dy(III).

4. (Original) The contrast enhancement agent of claim 1, wherein the chelator is selected from the group consisting of DTPA, substituted DTPA, DOTA, substituted DOTA, EDTA, substituted EDTA, CDTA and substituted CDTA.

5. (Currently amended) The contrast enhancement agent of claim 1, wherein the peptide comprises the amino acid sequence ~~NXEQVSP (SEQ ID NO: 2),~~ NXEQVSP (SEQ ID NO: 1), wherein X is an amino acid selected from the group

consisting of alanine, arginine, asparagine, aspartic acid, cysteine, glutamic acid, glycine, histidine, isoleucine, leucine, lysine, methionine, phenylalanine, proline, serine, threonine, tryptophan, tyrosine, and valine; the paramagnetic metal ion is gadolinium; and the chelator is DTPA.

6. (Original) The contrast enhancement agent of claim 1, wherein the peptide comprises the amino acid sequence NGEQVSP (SEQ ID NO: 3), the paramagnetic metal ion is gadolinium and the chelator is DTPA.

7. (Original) The contrast enhancement agent of claim 1, wherein the agent is in lyophilized form.

8-23. (Canceled)

24. (Currently amended) A kit for obtaining a visible image of a biological sample comprising a two-vial system of a lyophilized contrast enhancement agent of ~~claim 4~~ and an aqueous diluent, comprising:

- (a) a first vial comprising a lyophilized contrast enhancement agent, wherein the agent comprises:
 - (i) a peptide comprising the amino acid sequence NXEQVSP (SEQ ID NO: 1), wherein X is any amino acid;
 - (ii) at least one paramagnetic metal ion; and
 - (iii) at least one chelator; and
- (b) a second vial comprising a pharmaceutically acceptable diluent.

25. (Original) The kit of claim 24, wherein the lyophilized contrast enhancement agent comprises gadolinium, DTPA and a peptide comprising the sequence NXEQVSP (SEQ ID NO: 1), wherein X is any amino acid, and the pharmaceutically acceptable diluent comprises phosphate buffer saline.

Please add the following new claims:

26. (New) A contrast enhancement agent useful for providing a visible image of a biological sample comprising:

- (a) a peptide consisting of the amino acid sequence NXEQVSP (SEQ ID NO: 1), wherein X is any amino acid;
- (b) at least one paramagnetic metal ion; and
- (c) at least one chelator.

27. (New) The contrast enhancement agent of claim 26, wherein the paramagnetic metal ion is selected from the group consisting of transition, lanthanide and actinide elements.

28. (New) The contrast enhancement agent of claim 27, wherein the paramagnetic metal ion is selected from the group consisting of Gd(III), Mn(II), Cu(II), Cr(III), Fe(II), Fe(III), Co(II), Er(II), Ni(II), Eu(III) and Dy(III).

29. (New) The contrast enhancement agent of claim 26, wherein the chelator is selected from the group consisting of DTPA, substituted DTPA, DOTA, substituted DOTA, EDTA, substituted EDTA, CDTA and substituted CDTA.

30. (New) The contrast enhancement agent of claim 26, wherein the peptide has the amino acid sequence NQEQVSP (SEQ ID NO: 2); the paramagnetic metal ion is gadolinium; and the chelator is DTPA.

31. (New) The contrast enhancement agent of claim 26, wherein the agent is in lyophilized form.